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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF SIBLING INTERACTION IN
MULTIETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

By

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A THESIS

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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF SIBLING INTERACTION IN MULTIETHNIC-RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) is tied to wellbeing, especially for ethnic-racial minority individuals (Smith & Silva, 2011; Phinney, 2000), and the process of ERI development is inherently social. However, much of our research on ERI development has focused on ethnic-racial socialization processes between parents and children, despite the fact that sibling relationships tend to be integral to individuals' development and adjustment. Further, ethnic-racial socialization research tends to focus on monoethnic-racial individuals, despite our increasingly multicultural world. Thus, the purpose of this study is to determine the role that sibling interaction plays in multiethnic-racial identity development. 21 ME-R individuals were interviewed about their ME-R identity development process as well as what it was like growing up as a ME-R individual with siblings. Interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) and results show that *contextual factors shape the role that siblings play in ME-R identity development by shaping the ways siblings engage with difference, the ways siblings discuss race and ethnicity, and the ways siblings identify as individuals in terms of race and ethnicity*. Implications and opportunities for future research are discussed.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my late brother Michael Antony Cardwell, as well as my sisters Marlena Niccole Johnson and Marissa Lynn Cardwell, who were so fundamental to my life and development just as these siblings are to one-another.

Author Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE

Ethnic-racial identity (ERI) as defined by Smith and Silva is “the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be included and aligned with an ethnic [racial] group” (2011, p.g. 42). According to Smith and Silva’s (2011) meta-analysis of ERI development, secure ERI is associated with various aspects of well-being especially for ethnic-racial minorities. As such, the process of ERI development is important for understanding psychological well-being especially in adolescence and younger adulthood (Priest, Walton, White, Kowal, Baker & Paradies, 2014; Smith & Silva, 2011). Whereas it may seem simple for an individual to identify with the racial or ethnic background of their family, ERI development is a complex process especially for multiethnic-racial (ME-R) families where the diverse ethnic-racial backgrounds within the family environment likely lead to unique dynamics in the ERI development of individuals. These unique dynamics may not be captured in the current literature and models of ERI development (Nuru & Soliz, 2015; Rockquemore, 1999; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003).

Due to the fact that ME-R individuals are not phenotypically, and in some cases culturally, the same as either one of their parents, much of our understanding of the ethnic-racial socialization process likely does not speak to the experiences of ME-R families. Whereas a majority of research on ethnic-racial socialization has focused on dissemination of ethnic-racial norms from parent to child (e.g., Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006), other family members may play an important role in ERI development of ME-R individuals. Some research has accounted

for the role of grandparents and other family elders (Hughes et al., 2006; Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009), however sibling relationships may be central in this development process. Although relatively understudied in family communication research, sibling relationships are often intimate, unique from other family relationships (Dunn, 2002), and long-lasting (Fowler, 2009; Lamb and Sutton-Smith, 1982). Further, for ME-R individuals, siblings are often the only family members that share a similar ethnic-racial background. Thus, siblings may serve as a primary point of contact to discuss similar racialized experiences as well as a reference point for what it means to be a ME-R individual. Likewise, ME-R siblings have the ability to provide support to their siblings when other family members may not understand or may help create identity expectations that are not present in other family relationships.

Given that ERI is tied to aspects of well-being such as self-esteem, happiness, and mental health (Smith & Silva, 2011), researchers have focused on aspects of identity development that lead to secure ERI. However, this research is limited in two ways, (1) past research has focused almost exclusively on parent-child socialization, and (2) past research has left out ME-R individuals. Given the significance of siblings in our family lives, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the role that siblings' relationships, interaction, and conversations play in ME-R identity development. In the following sections, I first review the relevant literature on ethnic-racial socialization, ME-R identity, sibling relationships, and ME-R siblings culminating in the research question guiding this study. In chapter two, I summarize the method used to address the research question guiding this inquiry. The findings are discussed in chapter three. Finally, chapter four offers a discussion about the potential implications of these findings.

Ethnic-Racial Socialization

Much research on identity formation has suggested that identity development, including ERI development, is cognitive (Bergen & Braithwaite, 2009). However, as evidenced by Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (1986) as well as many other theories and studies, ERI development, and identity in general, is an interactional and communicative process influenced by socialization (Braithwaite, Foster & Bergen, 2018; Galvin, 2006; Carbaugh, 1996). Scholars have yet to come to a consensus on the definition of ethnic-racial socialization, as many believe that race and ethnicity should be studied as separate constructs (Hughes et. al., 2006). Although nuanced constructs, race and ethnicity overlap at the level of lived experience (Corss & Cross, 2008) and are often inextricably linked. Because of their inherent connection and often their inability to be separated in an individual's everyday life, it is useful to collapse these constructs when discussing ERI (Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004; Umaña-Taylor, Quintana, Lee, Cross, Rivas-Drake, & Schwartz et. al., 2014). For the purpose of this study, ethnic-racial socialization can be broadly defined as "specific verbal and non-verbal messages transmitted to younger generations for the development of values, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs regarding the meaning and significance of race [ethnicity] and racial [ethnic] stratification, intergroup and intragroup interactions, and personal and group identity" (Lesane-Brown, 2006, p. 400).

Ethnic-racial affiliations typically account for a large portion of our identities, especially for minority ethnic-racial persons (Phinney, 2000), and ERI is associated with a broad range of constructs including culture, language, family structure, and traditions. Secure ERI is also strongly tied to an individual's well-being (Smith & Silva, 2011) and a

strong affiliation with one's ingroup can protect minority persons against the negative effects of discrimination and marginalization by other groups (Giamo, Schmitt, & Outten, 2012; Outten, Schmitt, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009; Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

Additionally, strong ERI promotes strength, confidence, health, and self-acceptance (Outten, Schmitt, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009; Ruiz, 1990). However, arriving at a secure ERI is not a simple "black and white" process, as evidenced by the research on ethnic-racial socialization.

The past 60 years have yielded a substantial amount of research on ethnic-racial socialization as well as a number of ERI-development models (See Phinney & Ong, 2007; Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). However, this research has focused primarily on parent-child socialization (Hughes et. al., 2006). Although parents are one of the most important socializing agents, this narrow focus leaves out other important socializing agents including understudied family relationships such as aunts, uncles, and siblings. In addition to a focus on parent-child relationships, much of this research has also assumed that monoethnic-racial family norms also apply to ME-R families. This leaves ME-R individuals largely understudied. In the following section, I will review the literature on ME-R identity to highlight the importance of studying this group and to provide a more nuanced perspective of ethnic-racial socialization in families.

Multiethnic-Racial Identity

Multiethnic-racial (ME-R) individuals are those that have parents of different ethnic-racial backgrounds. Since the case of *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967, the court ruling that invalidated laws prohibiting interracial marriage in the U.S., numbers of ME-R individuals are steadily increasing due to the growing prevalence of interethnic-racial

couples. As the number of ME-R individuals continues to grow scholars are focusing more attention to the unique benefits and challenges these individuals face in terms of identity development (Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009; Soliz et. al., 2017). Benefits in ME-R experiences may result in personal strengths such as cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 1988), intercultural effectiveness (Cui & Van den Berg, 1991), greater flexibility (Ramirez, 1984), and less ethnocentric attitudes (Park, 1950; Smith, 1991). Because these individuals are more prone to intergroup contact, they have more opportunity to form tolerant opinions of multiple groups, thus increasing their comfort with and acceptance of different kinds of people. Conversely, challenges faced by ME-R individuals may result in patterns of emotional distress and psychological vulnerability (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). The aforementioned benefits could also lead to a less-secure affiliation with a single in-group, leading to confusion and possible feelings of insecurity, isolation, or inner-bias. It is clear that these benefits and challenges present a double-edged sword for ME-R individuals, and there are little theories or models that address these unique identity development processes as compared to the processes experienced by monoethnic-racial individuals.

There are many models of ERI development that have been applied to minority and majority monoethnic-racial individuals, however these models do not specifically account for the experience of ME-R individuals. For example, many of these models are based in the assumption that strong ERI is a result of accepting one's parent culture or minority culture and rejecting the dominant or other cultures. However, these models do not support individuals that may be a part of both dominant and minority groups (Poston, 1990) or multiple marginalized groups. Gibbs (1987) suggests that ME-R adolescents

faced with forming a secure ERI may have a difficult time integrating multiple self-concepts. Marginalization and group-antagonism between parent groups can cause ME-R individuals to feel as though they have to choose between either affiliating with just one group, or adopting a ME-R existence, (Hall, 1980) and this decision is highly influenced by the adolescent's personal network. These and other perspectives that problematize ME-R identity development (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1937) highlight the importance of studying the social factors that facilitate and constrain identity formation for ME-R individuals. Thus, it is important to study not only parent-child relationships and how they affect ethnic-racial socialization, but to study other family relationships and how they contribute to the complex identity development process.

Parents are one of the most salient socializing agents in terms of the shaping of ERI and identity in general, and it is clear that much ethnic-racial socialization research has focused on the effects of parent-child communication. However, the feeling of difference and isolation in ME-R individuals may be difficult for monoethnic-racial parents to understand and help dissolve, thus we must acknowledge that parents are not the only socializing agents in the family. Some of these alternative understudied socializing agents include aunts, uncles, and siblings (Floyd & Morman, 2014). As mentioned above, previous research has problematized ME-R identity development (see Rockquemore, Brunzma, & Delgado, 2009), categorizing this process as being plagued by marginalization from all groups. However we are gaining a better understanding of the contextual nature of growing up as a ME-R individual and the contextual factors that lead to positive ME-R identity development. In order to fully understand ME-R identity development we should understand the ways that other family members uniquely

contribute to the ME-R experience. Among these other family members are siblings, perhaps the closest family relationship an individual forms next to the parent-child relationship. In the following section I review the literature on sibling relationships, highlighting their profound potential in shaping identity.

Sibling Relationships and Identity Development

Sibling relationships are somewhat understudied in family communication research given that they have the potential to be one of the longest-lasting bonds we form, second only to the parent-child relationship (Fowler, 2009; Lamb and Sutton-Smith, 1982). In fact, most children spend more time interacting with their siblings than with their parents (Larson & Richards, 1994; McHale & Crouter, 1996), and most children in the United States (around 80%) grow up with at least one sibling. While parenting research has discussed the challenges of competition and sibling rivalry, siblings also have the opportunity to provide support and companionship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), and have profound effects on each other's external adjustment, internal adjustment, social understanding, and peer relationships (Dunn, 2002).

There are three characteristics of nearly all sibling relationships that make them stand out, their emotional power, their intimacy, and their wide range of individual differences (Dunn, 2002). Whether siblings have strong positive emotions toward each other or strong negative emotions toward each other, these relationships are often marked with great passion. In addition to this, even if siblings grow up to be distant from each other, their frequent interaction from childhood to adolescence still allows them to know each other extremely well. This familiarity coupled with the emotional power of the relationship increases the potential for siblings to influence one another (Dunn, 2002).

Lastly, sibling relationships are so interesting because they have the potential to be very supportive or very hostile, and while we can generally pinpoint patterns of behavior that predict closeness or distance in parent-child relationships, it is a more complicated process to pinpoint the reasons why sibling relationships show such a wide range of outcomes in terms of relationship quality.

While research supports the importance of sibling relationships, few scholars have devoted attention to the ways that siblings factor into ERI development. Despite this, a 2007 study found that African American individuals with more positive sibling relationships also had stronger youth ethnic identities (McHale, Whiteman, Kim, & Crouter, 2007). Research also shows that comforting and offering comfort to a sibling after a stressful situation, for example racial torment or isolation, is associated with profound positive effects for children and adolescents as well as increased closeness between siblings (Dunn et. al., 1994). This suggests that showing support in sibling relationships, at least in ethnic-racial minority contexts in the U.S., could have effects on ERI. Our widening understanding of the ME-R socialization process, and ERI development in general, could still benefit from an investigation of how other family members, including siblings, effect ME-R identity (Priest et. al., 2014). In the following section, I review the literature on ME-R siblings, highlighting their unique dynamics which necessitate further understanding.

Multietnic-racial Siblings

As previously mentioned, strong affiliation with one's ethnic-racial ingroup can protect minority individuals against negative outcomes due to discrimination and marginalization (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This concept of ingroup protection is echoed in

the protection and support offered by siblings. Protection and guidance offered by siblings in the formative years of adolescents could also help protect against the hardships in ERI development. It is noted by Root's research on ME-R individuals that "biracial experience is unique in that neither parent knows what it is like to be biracial, and neither is likely to have experience with the type of hazing to which a biracial individual may be subjected" (Root, 2003, p. 117). In many cases, a sibling is the closest person, or in some cases the *only* person, that exists within a ME-R individual's ethnic-racial ingroup in their family. Thus, the support of ME-R siblings, especially in influential periods of ME-R identity development, is likely to be important.

ME-R siblings can offer each other support and alternative reference points of what it means to be a ME-R individual. A monoethnic-racial individual may have multiple family members of the same race or ethnicity to look to as an example and for guidance of how to perform as a member of that group. In contrast, a ME-R individual could be subject to negative reactions from both family members and friends if they adopt the monoethnic-racial identity of just one of their parent cultures (Hughes et. al., 2006). Thus, a sibling can support and/or stand in solidarity with their ME-R sibling, lessening the tremendous weight of ERI development.

However, this is not to say that any two siblings will ever be 100% the same in either phenotype or ethnic-racial identification. Contrarily, many ME-R siblings self-identify as racially different from each other (Root, 1998). Although these siblings may not be able to offer support during adolescent times of ERI formation identical to that of homogeneous monoethnic-racial siblings, they may still be able to provide their siblings with a ME-R ingroup with which to identify. In addition to this, many ME-R individuals

grow up with siblings of completely different races and ethnicities. These siblings still likely play a role in ERI development, as both siblings are deciding what it means to grow up in the same family and with the same parents as someone that is phenotypically different from them, and thus what that means to their individual and shared family identity.

In addition to the positive effects that siblings can have on each other's ERI development, there can also be negative consequences. For example, in her 1998 study on biracial siblings, Root found that many ME-R individuals are subject to hazing, "an injunction to prove that one is an insider through a demeaning process of racial and ethnic authenticity testing" (Root, 1998, pg. 242-243). This type of ridicule can cause trauma and derail the identity process, and interestingly hazing does not only occur in non-family relationships, but within the family and within sibling relationships as well. Due to the fact that many ME-R siblings identify as ethnic-racially different from each other, some siblings may judge each other's cultural alignments, styles of dress, and even physical appearance. In addition to hazing, physical appearance can also be a strengthening aspect of ME-R sibling relationships, or a point of contention. For example, some ME-R siblings describe comparing their hair texture, eye color, and skin tone to that of their siblings as being a negative or confusing experience while growing up (Cardwell & Soliz, 2018). This illuminates how complex the process of ME-R identity development can be.

It is clear that ME-R individuals are faced with numerous choices to make, which can lead to a turbulent ERI development process. These daily occurrences can either be acknowledged or rejected as important, but it is undeniable that the ERI development is

inherently social (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In addition to interactions that take place every day, conversations also have profound abilities in shaping our identities (Bergen & Braithwaite, 2009). While parents tend to have more knowledge and experience to share with their children in terms of discussing racialized topics, approaching a sibling to discuss issues of race and ethnicity may be less intimidating. For this reason, it is likely that explicit conversations of race and ethnicity could transpire between ME-R individuals and their siblings. Thus, frequent interaction as well as racialized conversations between siblings likely play a part in ME-R identity development in both positive and negative ways.

Siblings have profound effects on one another in myriad ways, and the conversations and shared experiences surrounding identity that happen between siblings could shape the way they view themselves, their families, and the ethnic-racial groups they are a part of. Because of this, it is important to understand the role that these siblings play in ME-R socialization and identity development. This inquiry will broaden our understanding of the complex ERI development process undergone by ME-R individuals and provide insight into how relationships and interactions with siblings can alleviate challenges or further complicate that process of identity development. Thus, I pose the following research question:

RQ1: What role, if any, does the sibling relationship play in the ethnic-racial identity development process of multiethnic-racial individuals?

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the purpose of the current study, then reviewed relevant literature on ethnic-racial socialization, multiethnic-racial identity, sibling

relationships and identity development, and multiethnic-racial siblings, then proposed the research question that guides the current study. In the following chapter, I will discuss the method used to address the above research question, then I will report the findings of the study in chapter three. Finally I will conclude by outlining the implications and future directions of this research in chapter four.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the purpose of this study is to explore the role that sibling relationships play in the identity development process for multiethnic-racial individuals. Based on the review of relevant literature on ethnic-racial socialization, multiethnic-racial identity and sibling relationships, I proposed the research question that guides this study: *What role, if any, does the sibling relationship play in the ethnic-racial identity development process of multiethnic-racial individuals?* In this chapter, I outline the methods used to address this question. I begin by discussing the recruitment process and participants in the study. Next, I discuss the data analysis procedures and conclude with a discussion of the analysis process.

This study is one of the few of its kind to focus specifically on multiethnic-racial (ME-R) siblings. Besides the work of Root (1998), there have been very little investigations of the role that siblings play in the ethnic-racial socialization process, especially for those from interethnic-racial families. Thus, this exploratory study is well-suited for the interpretive paradigm, as it allows us to gain a depth of understanding about the ME-R sibling experience and to begin to find commonalities between the members of this group (Braithwaite, Moore, & Abetz, 2014). Harnessing the power of in-depth personal accounts of participants, this study aims to uncover how, if at all, siblings factor into the ME-R identity development process in order for researchers to move forward and study this unique context.

Recruitment and Participants

Participants were recruited from a large Midwestern University as well as through social media and relevant online listservs (e.g. discussion boards and organizations

serving ME-R populations, see Appendix A for recruitment scripts). Those participants from the University (n=8) were awarded research credit upon completion of the interview. In order to participate in the study individuals had to be over the age of 19 with at least one sibling and at least one parent from the following ethnic-racial groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, African/African American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle-Eastern, or Pacifica Islander/Native Hawaiian. This qualification stemmed from my interest in representing ME-R individuals with at least one parent from a non-European background. Individuals were invited to participate in the study if they have parents from different ethnic-racial backgrounds and do not necessarily have to identify as ME-R to participate in the study. Although participants were restricted based on parents' ethnic-racial makeup, sibling phenotype was not restricted in this study. For example, individuals with half-siblings that are not phenotypically the same as they are were still invited to participate in the study. In addition to this restriction, participants must have lived in the same household with their sibling(s) for at least 5 years during the participant's periods of middle childhood (ages 9-11) and/or adolescence (ages 12-18).

Participants were 21 ME-R individuals from a variety of ethnic-racial backgrounds and combinations (see Table 1). Participants were prompted to self-identify both their parents' ethnic-racial backgrounds as well as their current ethnic-racial identification, as this allows for a more complete picture of the individual's ERI (Charmaraman, Woo, Quach, & Erkut, 2014). This number of participants reflects sample sizes evident in previous research for an exploratory study (Soliz, Cronan, Bergquist, Nuru, & Rittenour, 2017; Root, 1998) in which theoretical saturation was

reached, meaning that new pieces of data will add little, if any, new value to the emergent analysis (Glaser & Strauss. 1967).

Table 1 *Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Parent Backgrounds	ERI at Time of Interview
Ralisha	21	F	Black and White	Biracial
Jonathan	20	M	Chinese and White	“yes”
Laura	38	F	Black, White, and Native	Biracial
Gabriella	19	F	Cuban and White	Hispanic
Sandy	19	F	Mexican and Swedish	“it depends”
Caleb	30	M	Mexican and White	Biracial Latinx
Marley	27	F	Mexican and White	Mixed
Samantha	20	F	Puerto Rican and White	Mixed Latina
Xavier	22	M	White, Korean, and Japanese	Hapa
Jessica	19	F	Black and White	Black
Aaron	23	M	Mexican and Native	Half Latino half Native
Collin	19	M	Black, Indian, and Cuban	African American mixed with Indian and Cuban
Andrew	20	M	Mexican and White	Half Mexican
Regan	21	Non-binary	White, Filipino, and Chamorro	“Filipino and Guamanian but my dad’s White”
Nicole	21	F	Indian and Black	Black, Indian, or Mixed
Elise	20	F	African American, Nicaraguan, and White	Biracial

Connor	24	M	Black and White	Black
Dustin	19	M	Cuban and Irish	Hispanic
Matthew	21	M	Hawaiian and White	Mixed/multi
Kelsey	35	F	Irish, German, Scottish, African American, and White	“Just me’
Darrin	19	M	African American and White	Biracial but more towards African American

Note. Age, gender, parent backgrounds, and ERI at time of interview are self-identified.

Procedures

Upon confirming willingness to participate in the study, the participants were contacted by me to confirm that they qualified for the study and to set up an interview via the participant’s preferred channel (e.g. in-person, Skype, FaceTime, phone). Then, participants were given an informed consent document to sign (Appendix B). Interviews were semi-structured following the attached interview protocol (Appendix C). This simple protocol allowed for participants to freely discuss topics that are important to them while being guided to discuss topics of sibling socialization, race, and ethnicity. For example, participants were prompted to talk about their families and siblings in general and chose to emphasize parts of family life that were important to them. Subsequent interview questions were centered around how the participant identifies, how their sibling(s) identifies, and what role their ERI’s have played their sibling relationship or their relationships with other family members. Participants were also asked to discuss specific conversations or topics of conversations they have had with their sibling(s)

regarding their own ERI or their sibling's ERI. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there are any other topics they would like to discuss relating to growing up in an interethnic-racial household with siblings. This allowed participants to freely bring up topics that are important to them without me dictating topics of discussion. The goal of this study is to explore the ME-R sibling relationship, not to compare it to the monoethnic-racial sibling relationship, thus, the interview protocol was designed to stimulate conversation, not dictate it (Tracy, 2013).

The interview protocol was piloted on two participants before continuing the collection process. This allowed me to review the effectiveness of the protocol and make any necessary changes before continuing collection. After two pilot interviews one question (How do you and your sibling express your ethnic-racial identities?) was added to part two of the protocol because initial participants stated that although they use the same labels as their sibling they still express their identities differently. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by me with the assistance of Temi, an online transcription service. I began by uploading the interview recordings to Temi's secure server, then the software automatically transcribed the interviews, then in order to verify the accuracy of the transcripts I played the recording aloud as I read through each line to correct any mistakes and label turn-taking before downloading the transcripts to my password protected computer. This service is fully computer generated and all transcripts were held on Temi's secure server on my password protected account before being deleted from the website. This resulted in 204 pages of single-spaced data.

Analysis

To analyze these data, I used Charmaz's (2006) method of grounded theory. There are different schools of thought on the optimal approaches and outcomes of grounded theory, and my goal in the use of this method comes from a mixture of both objectivist and constructivist assumptions. As stated by Charmaz, "The 'grounded' nature of this research strategy is three-fold: (1) researchers attend closely to the data (which amounts to 'discoveries' for them when they study new topics or arenas), (2) their theoretical analyses build directly on their interpretations of processes within those data, and (3) they must ultimately compare their analyses with the extant literature and theory." (Charmaz, 1990, pg. 1166) Grounded theory is an analysis tool that allowed me to both objectively and systematically let themes and concepts emerge from these data while also giving me the flexibility as the researcher and a member of the ME-R community to organize and present the data in what I believe is a meaningful way. My goal in this analysis is not to construct a positivist theory that objectively explains or predicts the role of the sibling in ME-R identity development. Rather, my goal is to use the experience of my participants to better *understand*, via a systematic analysis, the role that participants' siblings have played in their ME-R identity development and to understand what this might mean for existing theory and how we study ME-R identity development and family communication.

After familiarizing myself with the data by transcribing it verbatim, I began initial coding (Charmaz, 2006) by labeling any sections of the data that represented any meaningful thought about ME-R identity development and/or siblings. Units of analysis ranged from sentences to paragraphs and codes ranged from labels based on verbatim

verbiage used by participants to abstract or theoretical labels. During the process of initial coding, I also engaged in memo-writing (Charmaz, 2006), which involved me taking notes on the emerging themes or thoughts on the data after each interview. Next, I engaged in focused coding by reading back through the transcripts and identifying the most prominent themes among the initial codes. During this step several codes were organized and consolidated into 12 themes. Finally, I engaged in axial coding, where I organized these themes into four major categories and subthemes, identifying how these categories fit together and how they connect to existing literature on the ecology of ME-R identity development. I also engaged in the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1967; Charmaz, 2006) throughout all of these steps to reflect on my themes and make sure that relevant themes were being categorized and named as accurately as possible.

After I completed the analysis of the data, I conducted a data conference (Braithwaite, Allen, & Moore, 2017) to make sure my articulations of the data were correct. This process involves individuals from the communication field coming together to discuss findings and verify through deidentified exemplars that the themes and names given to those themes are an accurate description of the data (see Appendix D). During this data analysis, the existing four themes were re-organized into three themes and given their final labels. In addition to data conferencing I engaged in member-checking, the process of contacting participants after analysis to confirm that I am interpreting their experiences correctly (Doyle, 2007). During this process, I emailed a short description of the findings (see Appendix E) to all participants who expressed willingness to member check (16). Participants were invited to respond letting me know whether or not they believe their experience is represented in the findings of the study. Six participants

responded to this opportunity and all of them indicated that they felt represented by these results.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained the methods used to interview participants and analyze their experiences to discover the role that sibling relationships play in the multiethnic-racial identity development process. In chapter three I will report the results of the data analysis. I will conclude with a discussion of the implications and future directions surrounding this research in chapter four.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS

Expanding on current literature on ethnic-racial socialization, the goal of this study is to understand the role that sibling relationships play in shaping multiethnic-racial (ME-R) identity. I began in chapter one by reviewing the relevant literature surrounding ethnic-racial socialization, ME-R identity, sibling relationships and identity development, and ME-R siblings. In chapter two I discussed the participants in the study and how they were recruited, the interview process that they participated in, and the steps used to analyze these interviews. In the current chapter I will report on the findings of this analysis.

The analysis suggests that siblings are not a panacea for understanding ME-R identity development/socialization, and although siblings make a difference there are many other socializing agents that factor into this process. Simply being ME-R does not make siblings inherently closer or cause them to automatically play a larger role in ethnic-racial socialization than other family members. Rather, the role that the sibling plays in the identity development process for these individuals is uniquely shaped by many contextual factors on the individual, relational, family, and societal levels. It is not only the specific moments or conversations between siblings or day-to-day occurrences that comprise sibling socialization, it is also the characteristics of the social ecology and environment that are related to the process and outcomes of sibling socialization. By social ecology and environment I mean the characteristics that specifically comprise the sibling relationship like relational closeness, sibling personalities, and conversation patterns, but also those characteristics of our environments that are not seen as directly related to our sibling relationships like physical appearance, sociohistoric contexts, and

outside peer groups. Three themes emerged as major ways that contextual factors affect the role of the sibling relationship in ME-R identity development: by shaping *the process of engaging with difference*, by shaping *sibling conversations*, and by shaping *individual ethnic-racial identity (ERI)*.

Contextual factors shape the process of engaging with difference

This theme reflects the idea that *there are many unique factors and circumstances that affect the way siblings react to situations in which they are othered and thus the role that they allow their sibling to play in making sense of these situations*. Simply being ME-R and being siblings does not necessarily affect ERI or the sibling relationship on its own. When siblings are interacting with each other, their identities/roles as siblings tend to be more salient than their ERI's. However, when a sibling is othered or engages with difference due to their unique ethnic-racial makeup, either within the family or outside of the family, that is when the *ME-R sibling* identity tends to be activated. Many ERI development models suggest that at some point an individual realizes that they are different, often when an identity is ascribed onto them by others. In this case, when one sibling experiences a situation in which they are ethnic-racially different, an identity is not being ascribed to just that individual, it is being ascribed to the individual *and* their sibling(s). This tends to remind the individual that their sibling may be the only one who has a similar ethnic-racial experience in the world in terms of simultaneously being part of multiple ethnic-racial groups. Engaging with difference shapes how the individual interacts with and relates to their sibling which starts a cyclical shaping of the sibling relationship, ERI, and future experiences of engaging with difference. Often, siblings discussed how encountering difference has given them and their sibling(s) a special bond

which highlights the cyclical nature of engaging with difference shaping the sibling relationship and vice-versa. Further, being able to relate to a sibling after engaging with difference may affect the security of the individual's ERI because the closeness of their phenotypically similar sibling and the ability to bounce ideas off of them and stand in solidarity with them helps them feel secure in their identity.

There are many contextual factors that affect how individuals engage with difference and thus how these experiences shape the role their sibling plays in their ERI process. Some of these factors include how the sibling chooses to deal with the experience, whether the experience was positive or negative, and whether or not the individual's sibling has had a similar experience. For example, Samantha (20, "Puerto Rican and White") has a close relationship with her sister. When describing their relationship she states,

"Growing up, my sister was only mixed person that I knew. If I didn't have that I don't really know if I would, you know, come to the same conclusions, like about myself and my self-confidence." (p#10: 7)

The relational closeness that the sisters share is the first contextual factor at play in the way they relate to each other when engaging with difference. Because they are close to each other and are a main source of support to one another they tend to seek support in one-another when they feel othered. Samantha goes on to talk about how even though the world perceives her and her sister differently, when Samantha engages with difference which has made her feel like she is not Latina enough, she finds comfort and confidence in her own identity knowing that she has her sister and she is not alone.

“I think that like her, the way that the world perceives her, I think that I'm a little bit more white passing than she is, just like in experience. And so like, I think that she struggles with feeling Latina enough less than I do. Um, so I think that when we're around each other that we can both have that label like makes me feel less, like if she can feel confident in like her identity as a Latino woman then so can I. because we have the same parents, like we do have the same background. So, if she can then I can. So, it gives me comfort sometimes I think.” (p#10: 4)

Here, Samantha shows that when she engages with difference that results in her feeling invalidated as a person of color, her and her sister's relational closeness and solidarity allows them to help each other overcome these negative experiences even despite the fact that they have slightly different ethnic-racial experiences due to their physical appearance. Thus, Samantha's view of her experiences engaging with difference as negative combined with her desire to seek support in her sister resulted in reciprocal shaping between them in terms of race and ethnicity.

The next participant, Ralisha (21, “Black and White”), has had a similar experience to Samantha in terms of her closeness with her sisters. Ralisha had a difficult time feeling secure in her ERI growing up because many people did not see her as Black, due to her White features. She discussed many negative experiences in which she would come home from school and work feeling invalidated by others. In the following quote, Ralisha describes how her sisters helped her through these difficult experiences of engaging with difference.

“Um, I feel like both of my sisters that I'm like really close with, um, like are just some of the most intelligent women I've ever met. And so, like having them like close with me and like supporting me with literally everything that I do, like including how identify, it definitely had like a positive impact, especially growing up when I would come home crying being like, why doesn't my hair like yours? They would both like support me a lot and even when we were little. So I think it's definitely like a positive.” (p#1: 8)

Similar to Samantha's experience, the sisters' relational closeness and Ralisha's negative perception of her experiences when engaging with difference caused her to seek positive support from her sisters, thus shaping Ralisha's security in her ERI. Perhaps Ralisha's sisters would not have had such a strong positive impact on her ERI if the sisters were not close and if Ralisha felt positively or neutral about her encounters with difference and thus did not feel the need to seek support in her sisters. In these cases, differences in physical appearance may lead to comparison and negativity between ME-R siblings.

Relatedly, another participant Jonathan (20, “White and Chinese”) discussed that his relationship with his brother is characterized by a special bond that they share over their heritage. He states

“I guess in a nutshell our like shared experience as mixed-race siblings kind of, you know, is a common denominator that is unique in that we're the only ones who share it. But I would say that's certainly not the primary foundation of our relationship.” (p#2: 12)

Here, Jonathan exemplifies that his and his younger brother's shared ethnic-racial backgrounds do not necessarily define their relationship altogether but that he does feel a connection to him in terms of their race and ethnicity that he does not feel with their parents. He goes on to suggest that this bond is not a result of simply sharing heritage, but a result of "not belonging."

"I think it's safe to say it's brought us closer together... it was one of those things where we just kind of, you know, are drawn together in a way that maybe other siblings aren't just because we know we're different. Maybe not an explicit term, but that, you know, fake ambient sense of not belonging just kinda hangs in the background." (p#2: 5)

The contextual factor of these brothers feeling a mutual shared experience has given Jonathan a positive sense of belonging when he feels othered. This quote suggests that the bond of the ME-R sibling relationship is activated by experiencing difference.

In contrast, Kelsey (35, "Irish, German, Scottish, African American, and French Creole") describes how contextual factors surrounding her sister's experiences of difference led to their relationship and ERI connection being weak, which led their sibling relationship to play a much lesser role in their ERI development. When describing her life with her younger sister, Kelsey told stories about how difficult it was growing up as one of the only people of color in the area. While Kelsey describes being proud to be different, she recalls that her sister did not want to be different, so instead she rejected certain parts of her identity in order to fit in at school and in the community. Kelsey states

“So I think a lot of how we separated, it floated around how she didn't want to be considered separate from everybody else. Like she became part of the popular crew. She kind of forced herself into that box as far as I'm concerned and we just drifted apart.” (p#5: 3)

Kelsey goes on to discuss in several points in the interview that she and her sister did not have a profound effect on each other's ERI while growing up because there were many contextual factors such as her sister trying to fit in at their predominantly White schools and choosing to minimize or ignore ethnic-racial difference that led her and her sister to not relate in terms of race and ethnicity. Thus, engaging with difference can also distance ME-R sibling relationships, depending on the unique factors of their situations. In any case, an individual's experiences of engaging with difference often acts as a catalyst for the following theme.

Contextual factors shape sibling conversations

The second theme reflects the idea that *there are unique factors and circumstances that affect how siblings discuss race and ethnicity*. Explicit talk is an area of opportunity through which the sibling relationship can play a role in ME-R identity development. However, conversations about ME-R identity only tend to play a major role in development for siblings that discuss race often. Simply being ME-R siblings does not transcend family communication patterns and individual differences in communication habits, thus many contextual factors affect the ways ME-R siblings communicate about their backgrounds. As previously mentioned, many siblings do not tend to talk about race often because it is not the most salient identity/role that they play when they are in a

private setting or just interacting with each other, so often siblings either talk about race on a societal level or they talk about racialized incidents that happened to them. Some major contextual factors that affect how siblings discuss race are family communication patterns, relational closeness, siblings' individual communication habits, and siblings' individual personalities and interests.

Xavier (22, "White, Korean, and Japanese") is an active member of the online Hapa community and does some peer counseling for young ME-R adults. However, his older sister is not very interested in discussing race and ethnicity. He states

"I always try to be careful just because for me, uh, I guess it was a little bit harder to talk about because I don't want to like, uh, step on anyone's toes or talk about something that someone's not interested in and I just never get the vibe that my sister really cares." (p#11: 7)

Contextual factors at play in Xavier's experience include Xavier's communication habits of avoiding topics he feels others are not interested in as well as his sister's lack of interest surrounding issues of race and ethnicity, which have led to little to no conversation surrounding their ME-R identity. Similarly, Sandy (19, "Mexican and Swedish") discussed that although she may talk about racialized events occasionally with her brother, they don't often have deep conversations about ERI, as that is not how they tend to communicate in general. She states

"We don't really talk about it. He'll like mention something but it doesn't normally turn into a conversation of 'hey [brother] how do you identify?' Just

because that's not the kind of, that's not really how I talk to my brother, it might be how I would talk to somebody else but not, not to him.” (p#7: 8)

Here, Sandy and her brother’s individual communication habits are a major factor that has affected the way they discuss race and ethnicity. As previously mentioned, incidents usually act as a catalyst of conversation for ME-R siblings, but they do not tend to discuss their heritage or identities explicitly.

Although many siblings do not explicitly discuss race and ethnicity, sibling communication habits can change throughout the life course. For example, Caleb (30, “Mexican and White”) did not discuss race with his siblings when he was younger however their communication habits have developed which has caused them to talk more frequently about race in adulthood. He states

“Um, I think now that we're at a point where we can have more open conversations, it's helping at least to just describe experiences to each other and reflect, um, it gives us an opportunity to see our ignorance growing up... I think just building up vulnerabilities, through shared experience and time spent together can help with having those conversations just because we've done it before and we're going to continue trying to do it.” (p#8: 9-13)

Age, stage in development, and frequency and quality of past conversations are major factors in how Caleb and his siblings’ discussions of race and ethnicity have evolved.

In contrast, some siblings discuss race and ethnicity more frequently and explicitly. For example, Darrin (19, “African American and White”) states “I feel like it's always just been a very common topic in my house. There's never been, it's never been any

different than discussing anything else.” (p#6: 6) This quote suggests that if families have more open communication patterns in general that may affect the role that conversation plays in sibling socialization. Thus, family communication patterns (e.g. McLeod & Chaffee, 1973) can also be a contextual factor that determines sibling conversations. Similarly, some siblings cited that talking to their sibling played a major role in their ERI development. Regan (21, “White, Filipino, and Chamorro”) recalls conversations with their sibling being pivotal to their identity development. However, in Regan and their sibling’s case, their family communication patterns are very protective and closed-off, and the siblings have a very contentious relationship with their parents. Regan states

“My sibling and I shared a room like our entire childhood, and I know like late at night we used to have really long in-depth conversations about this and everything else... they would talk a lot about things my mom would say to them just like little comments, like honestly, like, microaggressions basically... I think my relationship with my sibling is so fundamental to my identity and vice versa. We needed each other growing up. Um, I don't know where exactly I would be, but I, I can say with certainty that it would be different. Um, because like it was important to have someone to bounce ideas off of. Even if we've only started having like very in-depth informed racial conversations like recently, like the past year or two.” (p#17: 4-13)

Here we can see that contextual factors like the quality of the relationship between siblings versus parents, relational closeness, sibling communication habits, and even whether or not siblings share a room (level/ intimacy of contact) can play a role in sibling

socialization. In addition, the last two cases exemplify how unique sibling relationships and socialization effects can be and we must consider contextual factors other than overall family communication patterns when examining how siblings discuss race and ethnicity.

Contextual factors shape individual ERI

The final theme reflects the idea that *there are unique factors and circumstances that affect how siblings identify differently as individuals in terms of race and ethnicity and thus how they relate to each-other*. A common misconception about ME-R siblings is that they identify the same in terms of race and ethnicity, but this is not the case. Many siblings identify differently and express themselves differently at different times over the life course, as identity shifts due to the same contextual factors that cause differences in sibling relationships and sibling communication patterns. In this case, however, many siblings identify differently based on contextual factors outside of the home (e.g. peer groups, generational cohorts, schools attended, exposure to diversity, current place of residence, etc.). These outside factors also include discourses on how society sees and labels ME-R individuals, which changes the terminology that individuals use to describe their identities (e.g. hapa, biracial, mixed, Eurasian, half). In addition, siblings often identify differently because they look different, which causes others to perceive their ERI differently. However, siblings are not typically upset with each other when they identify differently and siblings that identify differently still play a role in identity development. Individuals who identify differently still see their sibling as someone with shared experience, which again could have to do with the fact that the sibling role/identity is more salient than ERI when siblings are interacting. Common contextual factors that

shape sibling identity differently are physical appearance, age, sociohistorical factors, peer groups, stage in development, and the use of different terminology.

Laura (38, “Black, White, and Native American”) had a difficult time growing up as a ME-R individual. She is the oldest of her 7 siblings by a range of 6 to 30 years. Laura described in her interview that her siblings are developing their ERI’s differently because of the current sociohistorical context. She states “I have to say in their generation people are more accepting, than during my time. So it’s actually easier for them in their era versus mine.” (p#3: 4). Laura has noticed that because society is becoming more accepting of ethnic-racial mixing her siblings are having an easier time expressing their identities, where she did not feel as though she could fully express her identity until much later in her life, suggesting that sociohistorical contexts effect the way that siblings’ identities develop differently. Participants also cited contextual factors of age and stage in development as reasons why they identify differently than their siblings. For example, Matthew (21, “Hawaiian and White”) described that all of his 5 brothers identify slightly differently in terms of race and ethnicity and when describing one of his younger brothers’ reason for identifying as White he states

“[Brother 3] He's 13. He's Kinda like in the weird stage, so I wouldn't bet on him putting both. I'd definitely put it as he'd Mark White or Caucasian... I think he would do it more to fit in with his friend group then try to be different at that age.” (p#21: 3)

Here, age, stage in development, and peer groups are all factors as to why Matthew feels his younger brother identifies as White and not Hawaiian or ME-R.

Relatedly, generational cohorts and peer groups can also contribute to siblings identifying differently. For example, Nicole (21, “Indian and Black”) commented on how her younger sister has a more diverse friend group which has led her to be more comfortable identifying with both sides of her heritage. She states

“She [Sister] has a lot more of a diverse friend group that I did when I was in high school. Uh, so I don't think she, even though we both still exist in a predominantly white space, I think she has had more success with uh bonding with either of the groups that we're in.” (p#16: 3)

Nicole goes on to describe how having a predominantly white group of friends was a contextual factor that changed how she viewed her identity and that her sibling being able to express her ERI more openly in school and with her friends changed the security and expression of her identity. Nicole and others commented on how influential peer groups at school are in terms of influencing identity development which reminds us that it is important to consider these socializing agents in the ethnic-racial socialization process.

Another major contextual factor that shapes individual identity is physical appearance. Many participants noted that their sibling(s) look more or less like one of their parent cultures, which causes others, both inside and outside the family, to see that sibling as a more authentic member of that group. These ascribed identities based on physical appearance caused individuals to think about themselves and their self-concept differently than their siblings do. For example, participants often said things like “When I was younger I always was like, ‘well, I'm just white because I look white. So why not say that I'm white?’” (p#1: 5) or “White-Hispanic is normally what I say. Cause I don’t really

like look Hispanic.” (p#4: 2) These kinds of responses make it clear that although an individual may feel aligned with a certain ethnic-racial group or feel connected to their sibling in terms of race and ethnicity, the contextual factor of how they are viewed by others changes the way they view themselves. When describing why her brother identifies as Black and she identifies as Biracial Elise (20, “African American, Nicaraguan, and White”) notes that having loosely curled light hair and lighter skin is a reason why she does not feel comfortable identifying as a monoracial Black individual as compared to her brother that has more typical African American features. She states

“My brother growing up grew up more in where people assumed that he was Black. And then I grew up where people assumed I was more like mystery white. Um, so, for me it's like weird to say like, "Oh, I'm black" versus him It's like, okay for him to say I guess.” (p#18: 5)

Here, Elise describes that physical appearance is a factor in why she would not feel comfortable claiming a monoracial Black identity.

Another major way that siblings identify differently is in the terminology they use. Whether this is using terminology like “Hapa,” a more contemporary word used to describe a person who is partially of Asian or Pacific Islander descent, typically online, or using terminology like “half, ” siblings see these differences in terminology as a distinction that tends to indicate where they are in their stage of development compared to their sibling. For example, many participants stated that they do not like the term “half” and that their sibling’s use of the half terminology signifies to them that they have not yet reached a high level of identity reflection. Regan (21, “White, Filipino, and

Chamorro”) is very nuanced in their understanding of their identity and uses very specific terms to describe themselves, where their sibling has had a negative experience being ME-R and tends to use different terms. Regan states

“It was disturbing to me I guess especially from like the terms they use, the derogatory terms they use like mixed breed and happie, like I hate that so much and I remember talking to them about that and they said something about like, kind of liking it and I don't... So like, oh, like I'm half this or I'm a quarter this or that sort of thing. I really hate that because I think it's, it's demeaning and it makes no sense, like you can't cut me in half. And like one side is white and the other side is whatever. It's just ridiculous and it's demeaning, it's dehumanizing.” (p#17: 8)

Regan sees this terminology use as a distinction between they and their sibling's identity expression. Where Regan distinguishes between these terms based on their positive and negative connotations, other individuals use terminology as a way to express themselves as a unique being separate from racial identification, for example Jonathan (20, “Chinese and White”) states “There's a tendency to compartmentalize people into like box, right? It's like you have to be one or the other. I'm like, can like, can I just say yes.” (p#2: 2)

Here, Jonathan harnesses the power of labeling to go against traditional uses of the terms to describe ME-R individuals, instead he alludes to the fact that he is a whole person, not defined by ERI. These differences in terminology and what they mean to participants remind us of the power that denotative and connotative labeling has on identity.

Acknowledging the different contextual factors that affect how siblings identify differently reminds us that ethnic-racial socialization does not exist within a family vacuum, as two ME-R siblings with the same heritage raised in the same home may not identify the same way.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the findings of this study. Analysis shows that there are many contextual factors that affect the role that the sibling plays in ME-R identity development. Contextual factors affect the role of the sibling relationship in ME-R identity development by shaping how individuals engage with difference, how siblings have conversations about race, and how siblings identify as individuals. These findings suggest that although siblings do play a role in ME-R identity development, the role they play is activated in different ways by other contextual and social factors within their environments, and sibling socialization cannot be scrubbed of these factors. In the final chapter I will discuss the implications of these findings and make suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Complimenting the large body of work on ethnic-racial socialization, the purpose of this study is to understand the role that sibling interaction plays in shaping multiethnic-racial (ME-R) identity. In chapter one I framed the importance of the study by reviewing literature related to ethnic-racial socialization, ME-R identity, sibling relationships and identity development, and ME-R siblings. Chapter two provided background on the participants in the study and how they were recruited, the interview process that they participated in, and the steps used to analyze these interviews. In chapter three I presented the results of this inquiry which revealed that the role that siblings play in ME-R identity development is unique and dependent on many contextual factors. These contextual factors affect the ways siblings engage with difference, the ways they discuss race and ethnicity, and the ways that they develop to identify as individuals. I will conclude by discussing implications to be drawn from this study as well as directions for future research in the current chapter.

The results of this analysis suggest that the role that the sibling plays in ME-R identity development is highly dependent on contextual and social factors, or the characteristics of the ecology and environment in which the siblings exist. Three major themes emerged in this study, first that contextual factors affect the ways siblings engage with difference, meaning that there are many unique factors and circumstances that effect the way siblings react to situations in which they are othered and thus the role that they allow their sibling to play in making sense of these situations. Second, contextual factors affect the ways siblings discuss race and ethnicity, meaning that there are unique factors

and circumstances that effect how siblings discuss race and ethnicity. Third, contextual factors affect the ways that siblings develop to identify as individuals, meaning that there are unique factors and circumstances that effect how siblings identify differently as individuals in terms of race and ethnicity and thus how they relate to each-other as siblings. All of these themes suggest that although siblings do have an effect on ME-R identity development, these relationships are just one factor in understanding ERI development for ME-R individuals. Meaning when participants discussed how their sibling changed their ERI development process, they often mentioned their siblings as they relate to other individuals or events. For example, many felt close with their siblings in terms of heritage because they *did not* feel close to their friends in terms of heritage, thus rather than just the sibling relationship playing a role in ME-R identity development on its own, the importance of the relationship is shaped or activated by contextual and social factors like peer groups and how one engages with peer groups.

The results of this analysis reinforce many pre-existing elements of literature on ethnic-racial identity (ERI), ethnic-racial socialization, and sibling relationships. For example as stated above sibling relationships tend to be unique (Dunn, 2002) which is exemplified in the variety of different experiences participants have had with their siblings, the wide range of quality among these sibling relationships, and the differing levels of closeness and communication patterns of each relationship. In addition, these findings highlight the social nature of ERI development just as previous ME-R identity development models have (Root, 1996; 2003; Renn, 2003). However, there are implications to consider beyond this existing literature. In the following, I discuss the implications that these findings have for ethnic-racial socialization and interpersonal

family communication processes, ecological approaches to understanding ethnic-racial socialization, and our theoretical understanding of ERI development. I conclude with a discussion of more opportunities for future research.

Ethnic-racial Socialization

There are three major implications to be drawn from this analysis concerning ethnic-racial socialization: that ME-R siblings do not necessarily identify the same way, that ethnic-racial socialization is collaborative and ongoing, and that family communication and sibling communication are a unique interpersonal element to ethnic-racial socialization. First, the finding that ME-R siblings often identify differently is in line with Root's "Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People" (1993). However, this finding also offers a new perspective as to how we understand ethnic-racial socialization within the family. These findings confirm that two individuals with the same parents and heritage that are raised in the same house can develop very differently in terms of ERI due to factors like physical appearance, age, sociohistorical factors, peer groups, stage in development, and the use of different terminology. Thus, ethnic-racial socialization does not happen within a family vacuum, and although we should consider understudied family relationships like siblings when we study ethnic-racial socialization, we should also consider the other contextual factors at play outside the family.

Second, the results of this analysis reinforce existing literature that focuses on the social and ongoing nature of ERI development. For instance, when discussing how they talk about race and ethnicity with their siblings, many participants discuss that they have just recently begun to discuss these issues but that these conversations continue to shape them as individuals. Similarly, when discussing what has led them to identify differently

in terms of race and ethnicity as compared to their siblings, many discuss moving to more diverse areas later in life or starting a family as reasons why their identities continue to be shaped differently than their siblings'. These participants exemplify that ERI development does not stop in childhood, rather many participants recalled conversations and interactions with siblings, family members, peers, and community members that took place well into their adulthood, and many suggest that they are still evolving in their views of race and ethnicity. Thus, researchers should consider, the process of developing a secure ERI in adulthood, not just childhood and adolescence.

Further, ethnic-racial socialization is not only an ongoing interactional process, but it is largely influenced by interpersonal communication. Participants cite conversations and interactions with siblings and other family members as a major factor in their development, further exemplifying that our identities are constituted in our interpersonal interactions (Braithwaite, Foster, & Bergen, 2017). For example, when discussing incidents of engaging with difference, most participants suggest that they are othered through interpersonal interactions with peers, and those participants that are able to freely talk to their siblings about racialized experiences not only grow closer to their sibling because of the support they offer, but the support they offer tends to make the sibling feel more secure about their ERI. Researchers often study ERI development as a linear process and ethnic-racial socialization as a unidirectional shaping. However, the process of ethnic-racial socialization is dynamic and interactional, as siblings shape one another and they constantly re-evaluate their ERI's through new interactions, even into adulthood.

Third and relatedly, we should consider that according to this analysis, some siblings' experiences speak to the various family communication patterns that are reflected in the tenets of Family Communication Patterns Theory while others do not (Koerner, Schrodts, & Fitzpatrick, 2017). In this theory the authors claim that there are four major communications that describe families based on their conversation orientation and conformity orientation. These patterns are protective, consensual, laissez-faire, and pluralistic, and the authors claim that families do not tend to stray from these patterns. Some of the reasons why these family communication patterns do or do not map onto sibling communication are related to contextual factors such as age, individual interests, and gender, however other contextual factors that affect sibling conversations about race and ethnicity have to do with other family relationships. For example, some participants discussed that their whole family is open about discussing race and ethnicity, which has led them to feel comfortable discussing these topics with their siblings, while others agree that their family has an open orientation toward discussing race and ethnicity but they feel as though they can be more "candid" when talking to a sibling. Further, other participants cite that their family does not discuss race but they tend to have these conversations frequently with a sibling. Thus, this study exemplifies that we should consider the conditions under which certain co-relationships within families transcend or mirror common family communication patterns and how these patterns affect ethnic-racial socialization.

While there is merit in understanding both communication habits of entire family units and communication habits in specific family relationships (e.g. mother-daughter, grandparent-grandchild), interpersonal family communication research could benefit

from studying family communication as a system, or a series of interrelated relationships. Often communication habits in family units or in specific family relationships do not develop in isolation of other communicative relationships. Rather, the communication patterns between a pair of siblings may very well have developed due to the communication habits that have developed between the parent and the children, as evidenced in this analysis. For example, some participants discuss that their sibling was the only person they could talk to about race and ethnicity because their parents were not open to the discussion. However, others state that although they felt closer and more connected in terms of race and ethnicity with their sibling, they were more inclined to talk to their parent about race and ethnicity because of the nature of the two relationships. Thus, this analysis shows us the interrelated nature of co-relationships within family systems.

According to Systems Theory (developed from General Systems Theory; Bertalanffy, 1968), an approach to understanding family communication, all individuals and co-relationships nested in the family system are both interdependent and not isolated by environmental effects (Galvin, Dickson, & Sherilyn, 2006). Further, rather than just viewing families as systems of interrelated relationships resulting in unique communication patterns and socializing processes, we should consider how family systems are also nested in systems, bringing unique contextual factors into the ethnic-racial socialization processes of ME-R individuals. Acknowledging the ecology of family as it relates to communication leads us to also understand how this ecology affects ME-R identity formation.

Ecological Approaches to ME-R Identity

The above implications lead scholars to consider how we can encapsulate the uniqueness of the ME-R identity development experience. As the findings of this study demonstrate, it is not simply family communication that shapes ME-R identity. For instance, as indicated when participants discussed experiences of engaging with difference, there are social factors inside and outside of the family that make siblings' shared heritage and ethnic-racial experience salient. This shapes how siblings discuss race and ethnicity with each other and can determine the role that the siblings allow each other to play in dealing with those experiences. Further, this analysis shows us that it is typically contextual factors outside of family communication and ethnic-racial socialization that cause siblings to identify differently in terms of race and ethnicity. All of this speaks to the importance of an approach to studying ERI and ethnic-racial socialization that accounts for the social ecology of ERI development.

This body of research can benefit from an ecological approach to understanding ME-R identity development. In continuation of Root's Ecological framework for understanding ME-R identity (1996; 2003) and Renn's Multiracial identity theory (2003) we must not only look into the patterns of identity development that are common among ME-R individuals, including steps, stages, and outcomes, but we must examine the unique contextual factors and systems individuals are embedded within that lead to differences among ME-R individuals. For example, Root (1996) suggests that ME-R individuals engage in "border crossing" between the following four states of being:

- (1) "Having both feet in both groups so that one has the ability to 'hold, merge, and respect multiple perspectives simultaneously,'

- (2) shifting the foreground and background as an individual crosses between social contexts defined by race,
 - (3) consciously choosing to sit on the border and experiencing hybridity and a border identity as a central reference point, and
 - (4) creating a home in one ‘camp’ while visiting other camps when necessary”
- (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009).

Similarly, Renn suggests that ME-R college students’ microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem environments all heavily influence their propensity to adopt a monoracial, multiple monoracial, multiracial, extraracial, or situational identity (Renn, 2003; 2000). However, it is beneficial to understand how ME-R individuals interact with their environments to arrive at these states of being. As evidenced by the current study, it is not only that ME-R individuals exist within many social systems and are affected by many unique contextual factors that shapes identity. It is also how these individuals engage with their environments that shapes their identity development. These findings suggest that when participants engaged with difference the positive or negative attribution they assigned to the event, the way they dealt with the event, and whether or not they engaged in discussion about the event was just as significant in determining how the incident shaped their identity as the environmental factors that caused the incident to occur.

Examining the contextual factors like closeness and valence of family and peer relationships, physical appearance, communication habits about race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, community diversity, and others will help us understand how

various systems and environments interact to develop ME-R individuals' identities differently. Beyond acknowledging that these various systems and factors make a difference in ME-R identity development, we could benefit from moving to consider how the intersections of these various contexts lead to different ME-R identity development processes and outcomes. This leads us to consider that ME-R identity should not be studied as a single static outcome, but as a unique process that is shaped differently for each individual. Thus, the process of ME-R identity development is not simply shaped by contextual factors, but how individuals engage with these factors. We can better understand the relationship and interaction between ME-R individuals and their environments as it relates to ethnic-racial socialization by advancing existing theory.

Theoretical Implications and Opportunities

As an initial inquiry the aim of this study was to understand the role that sibling interaction plays in ME-R identity development through rich descriptions of participants' experiences. Because of this, the current inquiry was well-suited for the use of grounded theory. As stated by Charmaz, "Theories present arguments about the world and relationships within it, despite sometimes being cleansed of context and reduced to seemingly neutral statements" (2006, pg. 233). My aim in this study was not to produce a comprehensive theory that predicts the role of sibling relationships in ME-R identity development, rather to interpret and understand the experiences of these participants in order to explain the contextual factors that affect ME-R identity development as it relates to siblings. While the interpretive and qualitative nature of this study has offered a deep view into the ways siblings factor into this development process, as well as the contextual factors that are at play in this process, siblings are just one cog in the wheel to

understanding ME-R identity development and we should build off of current theory and the findings of this study to further explore ME-R identity. In order to do this, we could explore topics of ERI and ethnic-racial socialization using interpersonal communication theories like Family Systems Theory and Family Communication Patterns Theory and we could expand on existing ERI and ethnic-racial socialization theories like the Ecological framework for understanding ME-R identity and Multiracial identity theory to also incorporate the interpersonal and communicative elements of these processes.

First, this study advances existing family communication theory by highlighting the complex and interconnected nature of family communication surrounding race and ethnicity. We could benefit by applying a Family Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968) approach to studying ethnic-racial socialization processes within the family. Using this theoretical approach could help us understand how families function as a set of interrelated communicative relationships that facilitate reciprocal socialization. Second and relatedly, we could benefit from further explanation of how our family communication patterns function differently when discussing different topics. Applying Family Communication Patterns Theory (Koerner, Schrod, & Fitzpatrick, 2017) specifically to discussions about race and ethnicity could help us gain a better understanding of when, why, and how certain family relationships, like siblings, transcend or adhere to certain family communication patterns. As Baxter and Akkoo call for in their 2011 study, we could benefit from a shift in understanding family communication patterns as a trait-like characteristic to understanding these patterns as state-like features, that shift with different conversational topics like that of race and ethnicity.

Third, this study advances existing ME-R identity development theory by highlighting the social and interpersonal nature of ME-R identity development. Root's Ecological framework for understanding ME-R identity (1996; 2003) and Renn's Multiracial identity theory (2003) are theories of ME-R identity development that highlight the contextual and social factors that affect ME-R identity development. While these frameworks get us closer to understanding what contextual factors shape ME-R identity development and how, we could benefit by expanding these frameworks to acknowledge the ways that interaction and conversation factor into the social ecology of ME-R identity. As previously mentioned, the process of an individual actively engaging with their environment through conversation and interaction could give us a clearer picture of how these contextual factors shape individuals on the level of lived experience.

Opportunities for Future Research

Although this study provides insight on new questions we might consider surrounding ME-R identity development and siblings, there are still limitations that should be considered and offer additional opportunities for future research. First, although this analysis has given us a rich look into a wide variety of contextual factors that affect ERI development, we may benefit from exploring specific contexts (e.g. specific ethnic-racial compositions, genders, religions, socioeconomic statuses, etc.) and how their intersections shape ME-R identity differently. For example, a ME-R Muslim woman who chooses to wear a Hijab may engage with her environment differently and arrive at different identity outcomes than a ME-R Muslim woman who chooses not to wear a Hijab and two ME-R individuals from the same socioeconomic background may face different benefits and challenges if one is Asian-White and the other is Black-White.

Second and relatedly, the U.S. is a specific cultural context with its own sociohistorical definitions on what it means to be of mixed ethnic-racial heritage. Thus, examining how these identity processes differ in different regions and countries would compliment the findings from the current study adding other cultural-contextual factors to consider in ERI development.

Third, although this study deeply explained the experience of these participants, we could benefit from building off of these experiences to study these phenomena quantitatively. One way we could do this is by using the contextual factors and circumstances brought up by participants to quantitatively measure their specific prevalence and importance in the ME-R identity development process and link them to specific identity outcomes. For example, to get a better understanding of how contextual factors shape individual identity differently we can quantitatively assess how physical appearance, age, sociohistorical factors, peer groups, stage in development, and the use of different terminology shape ME-R siblings differently in terms of both the significance and valence of their effects. We could also use quantitative methods to assess how contextual factors interact with one another.

Conclusion

Through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews with ME-R individuals and grounded-theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006), this study has given us insight into the role that siblings play in ME-R identity development. Results suggest that contextual factors are key in shaping the ways siblings engage with difference, the way siblings communicate about race and ethnicity, and the ways siblings develop to identify as individuals. In the previous chapters I began by reviewing the relevant literature on ME-

R identity and sibling relationships, then I outlined the method that was used to complete the study, then I reported the results of the analysis. Finally, I discussed the implications that this research has on our understandings of ethnic-racial socialization and ecological approaches to understanding ME-R identity and I outlined theoretical implications and opportunities based on this research. In addition, I addressed limitations of the study and suggested opportunities for future research. These findings call for scholars to focus more attention to the complex and communicative nature of ME-R identity development. More research should be conducted to discover how the interaction between ME-R individuals and their socializing agents is affected by the individual's environment.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

A1. UNL Department of Communication Studies Listserv announcement

Ethnic-racial Identity and Sibling Communication

Hello!

My name is Megan Cardwell and I am a graduate student at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am studying sibling relationships between mixed-race individuals, as this group has been under-represented in communication research. If you meet the following qualifications:

- You are at least 19 years old,
- You are multiethnic-racial (have parents from different ethnic-racial backgrounds),
- You have at least one parent from one of the following groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, African/African American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle-Eastern, or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian,
- And you have at least one biological (either half or full) sibling that you lived with for at least 5 years during the ages of 9-18,

I would love to hear your experiences growing up with your sibling(s), and I would be very appreciative if you would share this post with your friends or anyone you think would qualify and be interested in being interviewed.

Thank you so much!

The purpose of this study is to investigate your perceptions of your relationship with your sibling(s). Participation includes being interviewed about your ethnic-racial identity, your relationship with a sibling (or siblings), your sibling's ethnic-racial identity, and general demographic information. It is estimated that completing the interview will take 45-60 minutes.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email the primary investigator at the following email address to express your interest or to ask for more information:

Megan.cardwell@huskers.unl.edu

A2. Social media announcement

Ethnic-racial Identity and Sibling Communication

The purpose of this study is to investigate your perceptions of your relationship with your sibling(s). To participate in this study:

- you must be at least 19 years old,
- you must be multiethnic-racial (have parents from different ethnic-racial backgrounds),
- you must have at least one parent from one of the following ethnic-racial groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, African/African American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle-Eastern, or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian,
- and you must have or have had a biological (either half or full) sibling that you have lived with for at least 5 years during the ages that you were 9-18.

Participation includes being interviewed about your ethnic-racial identity, your relationship with a sibling (or siblings), your sibling's ethnic-racial identity, and general demographic information. It is estimated that completing the interview will take 45-60 minutes. You will receive two (2) research credit for completing this survey.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email the primary investigator at the following email address to express your interest or to ask for more information:

Megan.cardwell@huskers.unl.edu

A3. University student organization groups announcement

Hello [MODERATOR NAME]!

My name is Megan Cardwell and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am a mixed-race individual, and I am interested in hearing the experiences of other people like me in terms of the different ways we navigate being mixed-race and how this effects our identities. As we know, having parents from different backgrounds can be complex, and I believe it is important to hear from others on how they deal with this complexity. Because of this, I am interested in speaking to members of your group to conduct research, however I would like to have permission from you to talk with your group first. Please let me know if you, or anyone in [GROUP NAME] would be interested in participating in this study!

Looking forward to hearing from you,

-Megan Cardwell

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT



Department of Communication Studies

Ethnic-racial Identity and Sibling Communication

The purpose of this study is to investigate your perceptions of your relationship with sibling(s).

To participate in this study:

- you must be at least 19 years old,
- you must be multiethnic-racial (have parents from different ethnic-racial backgrounds),
- you must have at least one parent from one of the following ethnic-racial groups: American Indian/Alaska Native, African/African American, Asian/Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Middle-Eastern, or Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian,
- and you must have or have had a biological (either half or full) sibling that you have lived with for at least 5 years during the ages that you were 9-18.

Participation includes engaging in an interview about you and your relationship with a sibling (or siblings), your ethnic-racial identity, and general demographic information. It is estimated that completing the interview will take 45-60 minutes.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research. There are no known risks that may result from participating in this research. Please remember that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdrawal at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator, the Department of Communication Studies, or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits for which you are otherwise entitled.

You may be participating in this research study as an option for research credit or optional extra credit in your Communication Studies course, if you are not, the remainder of this paragraph does not apply to you and you may move on to the next paragraph. This option is dependent on a prior agreement that you must have arranged with your instructor or as stated in the syllabus. For completing this interview, you will earn two (2) research credits. You will not be penalized in any way in your class for not participating in this study. Your instructor can discuss other research and non-research alternatives for earning credit if you do not wish to participate in this study. After you complete the interview, you will be asked to provide your name and instructor in order to report your participation. This information will not be tied to your data. Your instructor will be informed that you participated in a study in the Communication Studies department, but not which study you participated in.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will not be associated with you individually in any way, and your name will not be tied to any of your answers. Results may be presented in research presentations at academic conferences, publications in academic journals, and/or rationales for future studies. Results may also be reported to community organization or family practitioners interested in family relationships. In addition to this you will be asked if you would like to add your name to a list to be contacted in the future to participate in other similar research. Not wanting to participate in future studies will not affect your participation in the current study in any way

Please feel free to ask questions before or after the completion of the interview. If you would like additional information concerning this study after it is complete, please feel free to contact the investigator by phone or email. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigators or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. By typing in your name below and selecting “I agree”, you certify that you have decided to participate, having read and understood the information presented. If you would like a copy of this informed consent statement, you may print one off or email the primary investigator to request a copy.

Megan Cardwell, Primary Investigator
megan.cardwell@huskers.unl.edu

Dr. Jordan Soliz, Faculty Supervisor
Jsoliz2@unl.edu

Name: _____

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln wants to know about your research experience. This 14 question, multiple-choice survey is anonymous. This survey should be completed after your participation in this research. Please complete this optional online survey at: <http://bit.ly/UNLresearchfeedback>.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Before we start, I want to say thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences today. My name is Megan Cardwell and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I am doing some research on siblings with mixed ethnic-racial backgrounds. Before we start, let's go over the informed consent form you received.

[Go over informed consent]

I am going to begin recording now. Any information recorded in the interview will be kept private, and your name and any other identifying information will be deleted when the interview is transcribed.

[Start recording]

Part 1

I would like to start with some general questions about you.

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender ID?
3. How many siblings do you have?
4. Where is your position among your siblings? Are they older? Younger? What are the age differences between you?
5. Tell me a bit about your family.
6. Can you tell me your parents' ethnic-racial background?
7. How do you identify in terms of your race and/or ethnicity?
8. Does this ever change?

[Probing/clarification: For example, have you ever had times in your life where you felt more aligned with one side of your heritage? When you are asked what your race or ethnicity is do you always answer the same way?]

9. If you had to guess, how would you say your sibling identifies in terms of their race and/or ethnicity?

Part 2

One area I am interested in is what your relationship with your siblings was like and how, if at all, your relationship relates to how you feel about your race.

[answer any questions]

To start, will you tell me a bit about your relationship with your siblings in general?

[Probing/clarification: Did you get along? Do you get along now? Were/are you similar? Different?]

Talk to me about the way you and your siblings identify in terms of their race/ethnicity?

[probing/clarification: Sometimes mixed-race siblings will differ in how close they relate to either side of their heritage. Do you partake in different cultural norms? Participate in different cultural events? Express your ethnicity/race differently? Have you ever identified differently? Either now or in the past?]

1. Why do you think that you both identify this way?
2. How do you and your sibling express your ethnic-racial identities?
3. Tell me about the ways, if any, that how you and your sibling(s) identify has affected your relationship.
4. Tell me about how, if at all, the way your sibling(s) identify has affected your view of your own ethnic-racial identity.
5. Tell me about the ways, if any, that you and/or your sibling(s) ethnic-racial identity has affected your other family relationships.

Will you talk about how you relate to your siblings in terms of your race/ethnicity versus how you relate to your parents in terms of race/ethnicity?

How, if at all, do you think that having a sibling has affected or does affect how you view your own race/ethnicity? Ethnicity in general?

1. Is this a positive or negative effect?

Part 3

Now we are in the final part of this interview. Another area I am interested in is how, if at all, multiethnic-racial sibling(s) talk about their race/ethnicity.

Will you talk to me about how, if at all, you and your siblings discuss your race and ethnicity?

Tell me about a specific conversation you have had with your siblings about your race/ethnicity?

1. If you can't think of a specific conversation, can you talk to me about of the kinds of topics that come up when you discuss your race/ethnicity with your siblings?

Can you tell me about any other conversations, incidents, or topics related to growing up with your siblings while being multiethnic-racial that come to mind that you would like to discuss?

That concludes the interview, again thank you so much for participating and sharing your insights with me, it helps me a lot and helps my research community include more

types of people in our research. Do you have any questions about the study or the interview? When I am in the stages of writing up the paper for this study, I would love to check with you to make sure that I am interpreting our conversation correctly. Would you like to be a part of this process? [explain what verification would entail].

[Turn off recording]

The last thing I would like to discuss is future research. Like I mentioned, it is important to include multiethnic-racial perspectives in research, and we are always looking for people who are interested in sharing their perspective, would you be interested in being contacted in the future about research opportunities relating to ethnic-racial identity?

Ask for student participants' record name, NUID, class, and instructor.

APPENDIX D: DATA CONFERENCE DOCUMENT

Multiethnic-racial siblings and Identity Development

Megan Cardwell

Method: Charmaz's Grounded Theory (2006)

RQ: What role, if any, does the sibling relationship play in the ethnic-racial identity development process of multiethnic-racial individuals?

Results

Overall findings: Siblings are not a panacea for understanding multiethnic-racial (ME-R) family socialization/ identity development, but they do factor into ME-R identity development. There are many contextual factors (gender, family communication patterns, family dynamics, age, sibling personalities, etc.) that affect sibling relationships and in turn, how those relationships affect ME-R identity. It is not simply ME-R identity that affects sibling relationships, but how siblings interact with these contextual factors as well as the nested environments they exist in (e.g. race/ethnicity, class, social/temporal context, peer groups, families, etc.) and how it changes their interaction with each other that begins a cycle of shaping between the sibling relationship and ethnic-racial identity (ERI). So in short, the role that the sibling plays in ERI development is dependent on the nature of the relationship and contextual factors, however the sibling relationship tends to have positive effects (whether big or small) on ERI development. The following are 2 themes (and 2 sub-themes) that have resulted from my analysis:

1. Context is key

Sibling relationships are unique, and the nature of the relationship (and thus its affects on ERI development) are ecologically bound. ME-R sibling relationships do not tend to transcend these ecological factors and there is no clear pattern between ME-R siblings in terms of relationship quality or ERI development effects.

Codes included in this theme:

closer to ERI of parent, closer to ERI of sibling, we do talk about race, we don't talk about race, it is what it is, unspoken family narratives, sibling personality differences, different interests, siblings matter, positive effect, neutral effect

Examples:

"They gave me the peace I needed." (p#3: 7)

"So I think a lot of how we separated, it floated around how she didn't want to be considered separate from everybody else. Like she became part of the popular

crew. She kind of forced herself into that box as far as I'm concerned and we just drifted apart.” (p#5: 3)

“So I think sometimes there's like um almost division between my mom and then my siblings and then my dad, like just because of some of the cultural climate, like Mom's white, dad's Mexican we're half, we're different than both of them.” (p#15: 5)

“like I'm a person who's like really proud to be Cuban, I just think he just doesn't care as much, so like, we all look like, not Hispanic, so he just says he's white—he's also a lot closer with my dad than my mom so I think that influenced it a lot too, 'cause like me and my mom are super close, so that's why I've always been so proud of being Cuban. But he—him and my dad are more close I think that probably effected it too.” (p#4: 2)

“I don't really like bond with my sister over, like multiethnic stuff. Um, mainly because I don't really think she cares too much about it.” (p#11: 10)

In addition to just causing differences in sibling relationships and effects on ME-R identity in general, there two major ways that ecological factors affect the role that siblings play in the ME-R identity development process: by affecting conversations, and by affecting individual identity.

1.1. Conversations

I predicted that ME-R siblings would talk about race and identity frequently with their siblings because they are the only ones phenotypically similar to each other. However, simply being ME-R siblings does not transcend family communication patterns and individual differences in communication habits, thus many ecological factors affect the ways ME-R siblings communicate about their backgrounds. Another factor to why many siblings do not tend to talk about race often is because it is not the most salient identity/role when they are in a private setting or just existing together, so often siblings either talk about race on a societal level or they talk about racialized incidents that happen to them. So, conversations about ME-R identity only tend to play a major role in development for siblings that discuss race often.

Codes included in this theme: we do talk about race, we talk about societal stuff, we talk about incidents, parent best of both world ideals, I talk to my parents about it, language, joking about difference, don't talk about it

Examples:

2 “we don't really talk about it. He'll like mention something but it doesn't normally turn into a conversation of “hey [brother] how do you like identify” like just because that's not the kind of. That's not really how I talked to my brother, it might be how I would talk to somebody else but not, not to him.” (p#7: 8)

“He’s someone I can like always talk about that stuff ‘cause like he understands, so I think he’s actually helped, even though we have a little bit different opinions.” (p#4: 4)

3 “Um, I think now that we're at a point where we can have more open conversations, it's helping at least to just describe experiences to each other and reflect, um, it gives us an opportunity to see our ignorance growing up.” (p#8: 9) “I think some of that probably has some, plays some role in our ability just to, outside of the racial part, I think just building up vulnerabilities, through shared experience and time spent together can help with having those conversations just because we've done it before and we're going to continue trying to do it.” (p#8: 13)

(has to do with age)

“I feel like I can be more candid with her.” (p#16: 5)

5 “I think my relationship with my sibling is so fundamental to my identity and vice versa. We needed each other growing up. Um, I don't know where exactly I would be, but I, I can say with certainty that it would be different. Um, because like it was important to have someone to bounce ideas off of. Even if we've only started having like very in-depth informed conversations like recently, like the past year or two.” (p#17: 12-13) “Um, I know we used to have, my sibling and I shared a room like our entire childhood, and I know like late at night we used to have really long in depth conversations about this and everything else... they would talk a lot about things my mom would say to them just like little comments, like honestly, like, microaggressions basically.” (p17:4)

4 “I feel like it's always just been a very common topic in my house. There's never been, it's never been any different than discussing anything else.” (p#6: 6)

“he never really came to me very often with things like, with serious things like that.” (p#9:9)

1 “I always try to be careful just because um like, for me, uh, I guess it was a little bit harder to talk about because I don't want to like, uh, like

step on anyone's toes or talk about something that someone's not interested in and I just never get the vibe that my sister really cares.” (p#11:7)

1.2. Outside world shapes ID differently and that's okay

A common misconception about ME-R siblings is that they identify the same in terms of race and ethnicity, but this is not the case. Many siblings identify differently and express themselves differently at many different points in time as identity shifts due to the same contextual factors that cause differences in sibling relationships and sibling communication patterns. In this case, however, many siblings identify differently based on contextual factors outside of the home (e.g. peer groups, generational cohorts, schools attended, exposure to diversity, current place of residence, etc.). These outside factors also include discourses on how society sees and labels ME-R individuals, which changes the terminology that they use to describe their identity (e.g. hapa, biracial, mixed, Eurasian, half). In addition, siblings identify differently because they look different, which causes others to perceive their ERI differently. However, siblings are not typically upset with each other when they identify differently, which again could have to do with the fact that the sibling role/identity is more salient than ERI when siblings are interacting. This theme reminds us that ethnic-racial socialization does not exist within a family vacuum, as two ME-R siblings with the same heritage raised in the same home may not identify the same way.

Codes included in this theme: physical appearance differences, growing up differently, living in different places, ag/stage in development, terminology, how others see you, ID changes around different people, expressing ID differently, organizations and ID

Examples:

“I have to say in their generation people are more accepting, than during my time. So it's actually easier for them in their era versus mine.” (p#3: 4)

“she has a lot more of a diverse friend group that I did when I was in high school. Uh, so I don't think she, even though we both still exist in a predominantly white space, I think she has had more success with uh bonding with either of the groups that we're in.” (p#16: 3)

“Like they had the Afro, they had the like nice hair that was like, like I was just so jealous, like you have beautiful hair and I just have wavy hair. So it was always easier for them to identify that way. I think because people can identify them as black with their hair versus like me people just see my hair and it's like every other white girl there is.” (p#1: 3)

“my brother growing up grew up more in where people assumed that he was black. And then I grew up where people assumed I was more like mystery white. Um, so I, for me it's like weird to say like, "Oh, I'm black" versus him It's like, okay for him to say I guess.” (p#18: 5)

“So like, oh, like I'm half this or I'm a quarter this or that sort of thing. I really hate that because I think it's, it's demeaning and it makes no sense, like you can't cut me in half. And like one side is white and the other side is whatever. It's just ridiculous and it's demeaning, it's dehumanizing.” (p#17: 8)

2. Reciprocal shaping of ERI and sibling relationship is activated by engaging with difference

Siblings often said that their ERI doesn't really affect their relationship with their sibling, many said that their sibling's ERI has shaped their ERI in some way, but most said that their sibling relationship shaped their ERI. I had a hard time teasing out this difference. Simply being ME-R and being siblings does not necessarily affect ERI or the sibling relationship on its own. When siblings are interacting with each other, their identities/roles as siblings tend to be more salient than their ERI's. However, when a sibling goes out into the world and engages with difference (or engages with difference within the family), that is when the *ME-R sibling* identity tends to be activated. This maps onto many ERI development models that state at some point in development we realize we are different than others when ethnic-racial identities are ascribed onto us. The only difference here is that the identity is not just ascribed to *me* it is ascribed to *us* (me and my sibling). This makes siblings recognize their similarity and may affect their relationship, typically by giving them a special bond, and it may affect the security of their ERI because the closeness of their phenotypically similar sibling and the ability to bounce ideas off of them and stand in solidarity with them helps them feel secure in their identity or re-evaluate what their ERI means to them.

Codes included in this theme: ERI affects ERI, ERI does not affect ERI, ERI does not affect relationship, Relationship does affect ERI, the only mixed person I knew, special bond, made us closer, not having a sibling would definitely be different, it is what it is

Examples:

“Oh, I, I feel like I can easily imagine a world where if I didn't have a sister I feel like I would be even more lost than I have been, uh, because there's not a lot of black and Indian people, there would be no one that I could relate to. Not even my parents because they're not mixed. Uh, and I feel like it's super and I'm so blessed and grateful to have her in my life because we get to relate about these things. And even though I know other mixed people, you know, it's not the same because she knows my family, you know? Uh, and we're familiar with the same things. Uh, yeah, I, I would, I feel like the whiteness that I felt with my growing up would have been exponentially more so because I would probably lean into, uh, my friends who are predominantly white.” (p#16: 5)

“Um, I feel like both of my sisters that I'm like really close with, um, like are just some of the most intelligent women I've ever met. And so like having them like close with me and like supporting me with literally everything that I do, like including how identify um like, it definitely had like a positive impact, especially growing up when I would come home crying being like, why doesn't my hair like yours? They were both like support me a lot and even when we were little. So I think it's definitely like a positive.” (p#1: 8)

“I think it's safe to say it's brought us closer together... it was one of those things where we just kind of, you know, are drawn together in a way that maybe other siblings aren't just because we know we're different. Maybe not an explicit term, but that, you know, fake ambient sense of not belonging just kinda hangs in the background.” (p#2: 5) “I guess in a nutshell our like shared experience as mixed race siblings kind of, you know, is a common denominator that is unique in that we're the only ones who share it. But I wouldn't say that's certainly not the primary foundation of our relationship.” (p#2: 12)

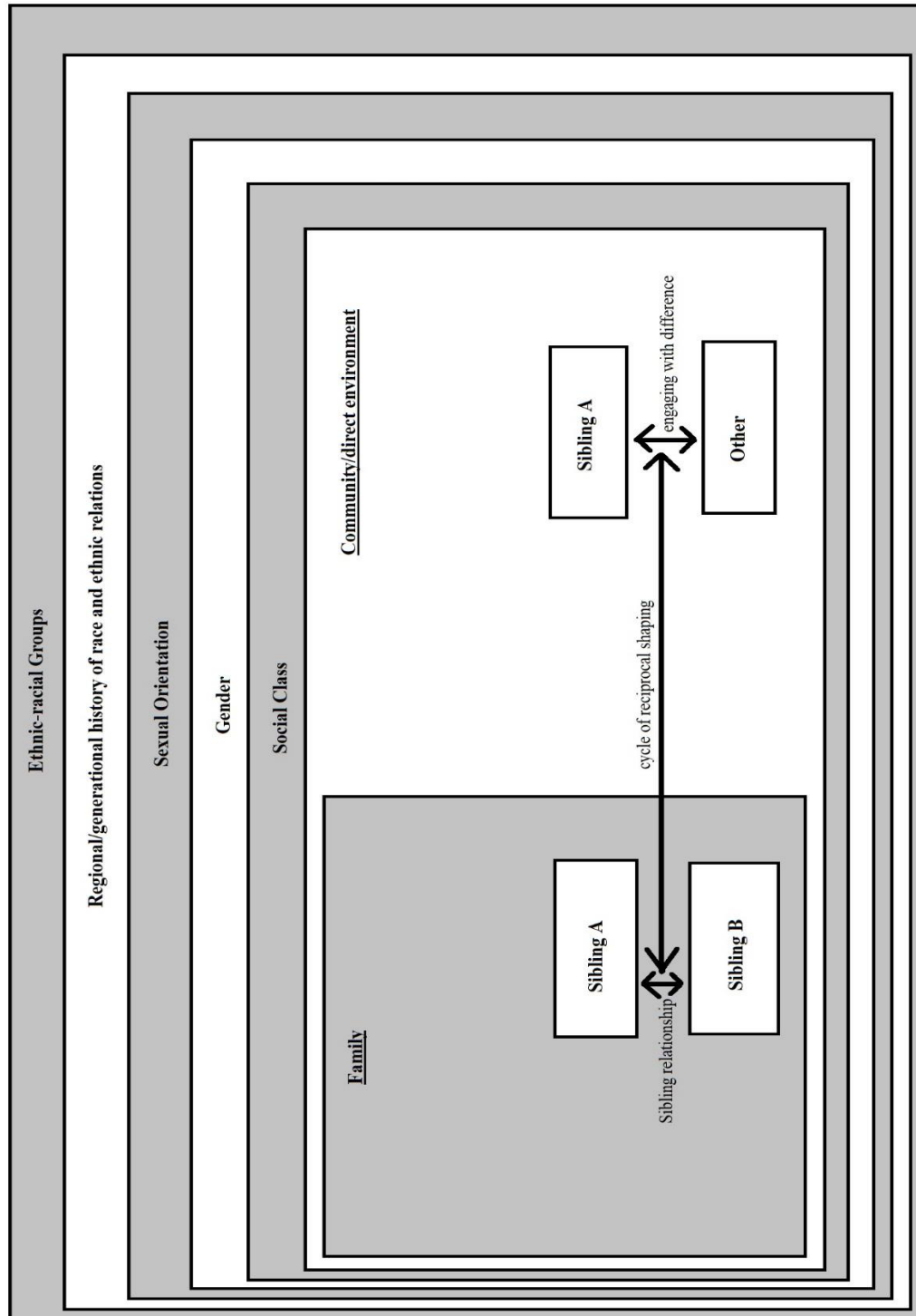
“I think it's made me think about it more, especially recently because it was, I think pretty recently that he started identifying as Hispanic, before I don't think he thought about it. Um, but now I think like the past couple of years I've noticed it more and I just as a result have been thinking about it more, but I don't know if it's changed the way I identify at all.” (p#7: 8)

“like growing up, like my sister was only mixed person that I knew if I didn't have that, like I don't really know if I would, you know, come to the same conclusions, like about myself and my self confidence. So I think definitely I don't know what that looks like at all, but I think it would definitely be different.” (p#10: 7)

“Just noticing how different her experience is from what mine was in high school. Uh, definitely led me to reevaluate how I had grown up and how that affected my identity.” (p#16:4)

“because I wouldn't have like the, not really support but like the, like a backup person, like that is from that same thing. Especially in the town we grew up in, like just being like you'd almost be considered like a outsider, that's a really strong word. Yeah, I think. I think I wouldn't identify as much with it. Like I think I wouldn't be like outspoken about it. Like, it would be something I would know but I wouldn't want to share it as much with others as I do now... . Like someone that can relate. If it's a sibling, you have someone that knows what you've been through, knows where you come from.” (p#21: 5)

“I think that like um like her, like the way that the world perceives her. Like I think that I'm like a little bit more white passing than she is. um just like in experience. And so like, um, I think that she like she struggles with like she struggles with feeling Latina enough less than I do. Um, so I think that, that like that when we're around each other that we can both have that label like makes me feel less like, like if she can feel confident in like her identity as a Latino woman then so can I. because we have the same parents, like we do like have the same background. So like if like, like if she can then I can. So it gives me comfort sometimes I think.” (p#10: 4)



APPENDIX E: MEMBER-CHECK SCRIPT

Hello!

A few months back we had a conversation about what it was like growing up as a multiethnic-racial individual with siblings. I am emailing you today because I asked if I could contact you with some preliminary results of this study. Below, I have provided some information about the findings of the analysis and I would love to know whether or not you feel represented somewhere in this analysis. Do keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive representation of all ME-R individuals' experiences, rather it is common themes among the experiences of everyone I interviewed. I want to reiterate that I am so appreciative of the help you have given me so far, and in no way are you required to give your feedback on these results. However, if you have any comments please feel free to respond to this email within the next week with as long or short a response as you feel comfortable with.

Again, thank you so much for participating and expressing your voice in multiethnic-racial identity research and please let me know if you would like a copy of the finished report.

Initial Results:

RQ: What role, if any, does the sibling relationship play in the ethnic-racial identity development process of multiethnic-racial individuals?

Overall findings: Siblings are not a magic pill for understanding multiethnic-racial (ME-R) identity development, but they do factor into ME-R identity development. There are many individual factors and differences (e.g. gender, family communication patterns, family dynamics, age, sibling personalities, etc.) that affect sibling relationships and in turn, how those relationships affect ME-R identity. It is not simply ME-R identity that affects sibling relationships, but how siblings interact with these individual factors as well as the environments they exist in (e.g. race/ethnicity, class, social/temporal context, peer groups, families, etc.) and how it changes their interaction with each other that begins a cycle of shaping between the sibling relationship and ethnic-racial identity (ERI). The following three themes found throughout all of the 21 interviews conducted are that individual factors and differences effect the role of the sibling in ERI development by changing the ways siblings experience being different, by changing the ways siblings discuss race and ethnicity, and by changing the ways siblings identify as individuals.

Individual factors and differences shape the process of experiencing being different

Siblings often said that their ERI doesn't really affect their relationship with their sibling, many said that their sibling's ERI has shaped their ERI in some way, but most said that their sibling relationship shaped their ERI. It was difficult to tease out this difference.

Simply being ME-R and being siblings does not necessarily affect ERI or the sibling relationship on its own. When siblings are interacting with each other, their identities/roles as siblings tend to be more important than their ERI's. However, when a sibling goes out into the world and experiences what it is like to be different (or engages with difference within the family), that is when the ME-R sibling identity tends to be activated. This maps onto many ERI development models that state at some point in development a person realizes they are different than others when ethnic-racial identities are forced onto them. The only difference here is that the identity is not just forced onto me it is forced onto us (me and my sibling). This makes siblings recognize their similarity and may affect their relationship, typically by giving them a special bond, and it may affect the security of their ERI because the closeness of their racially similar sibling and the ability to bounce ideas off of them and stand in solidarity with them helps them feel secure in their identity or re-evaluate what their ERI means to them.

Individual factors and differences shape conversations

Simply being ME-R siblings does not override family communication patterns and individual differences in communication habits, thus many individual factors and differences affect the ways ME-R siblings communicate about their backgrounds. Another factor to why many siblings do not tend to talk about race often is because it is not the most important identity/role when they are in a private setting or just existing together, rather in these moments they are siblings first and foremost. So, often siblings either talk about race on a societal level (e.g. news-related events) or they talk about racialized incidents that happen to them (e.g. getting called a racial slur). Conversations about ME-R identity only tend to play a major role in development for siblings that explicitly discuss race often.

Individual factors and differences shape individual identity

A common misconception about ME-R siblings is that they identify the same in terms of race and ethnicity, but this is not the case. Many siblings identify differently and express themselves differently at many different points in time, as identity shifts due to the same individual factors and differences that cause differences in sibling relationships and sibling communication patterns. In this case, however, many siblings identify differently based on individual factors outside of the home (e.g. peer groups, generational cohorts, schools attended, exposure to diversity, current place of residence, etc.) In addition, siblings identify differently because they look different, which causes others to perceive their ERI differently. However, siblings are not typically upset with each other when they identify differently, which could have to do with the fact that the sibling role/identity is more important to the relationship than ERI. This theme reminds us that ethnic-racial socialization does not exist within a family vacuum, as two ME-R siblings with the same heritage raised in the same home may not identify the same way.

Looking forward to hearing from you!